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Letter dated 21 March 2001 from the Prime Minister of Somalia addressed to the President of the Security Council

A rather belated congratulations for holding the Presidency of the Security Council during the month of March. You deserve this important and prestigious post and your great country deserves the recognition.

Since our delegation had the pleasure to meet with the Security Council on 11 January 2001, the Transitional National Government of Somalia has been aggressively pursuing its policy of constructive and peaceful dialogue with the groups that are outside the Arta process in order to bring about national reconciliation.

Building upon the Arta outcome is, and will continue to be, our single most important national objective. We have succeeded in engaging two out of the five factions based in Mogadishu that are not supportive of the Arta Conference. Mohamed Qanyare Afrah holds a Cabinet post in the Transitional National Government and close associates of Hussein Haji Bod have also joined the Cabinet. Given a chance, we are confident that the Transitional National Government and the remaining groups that are outside the Arta framework can work out acceptable and honourable agreements. Given a chance, the Somali people have it in them to negotiate seriously and resolve these apparently intractable differences. Given a chance, the Transitional National Government and the Somali people will not let down the Security Council, which has been steadfast in supporting the unity, territorial integrity and political independence of Somalia. If only we are given that chance.

Our neighbour, Ethiopia, is not prepared to give us that chance. On the contrary, Ethiopia is determined to destroy our chance to restore peace, stability, democratic governance and political independence to Somalia. Ethiopia is not opposed merely to the election of President Abdiqassim Salad Hassan and the composition of the Transitional National Government and Transitional Parliament; Ethiopia is vigorously opposed to the very idea of a reconstituted independent Somali State. Ethiopia's actions, not the lip-service it pays to the resolutions of the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), pose a clear and present danger to our unity, territorial integrity and political independence. We would like to submit to you and to the other members of the Security Council that Ethiopia's

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unalloyed aggressive actions are a threat to peace in Somalia, the subregion and the international community. Without exaggeration, we in Somalia are alarmed and are forced, therefore, to share with you our grave concern.

Some of the recent actions of Ethiopia provide the basis of our deep concern:

1. The Transitional National Government invested heavily in engaging the remaining three groups based in Mogadishu that were opposed to the Arta process, and we were very close to cutting deals with two of the three. Ethiopia knew perfectly well of the developments and embarked upon an obstructionist policy of beckoning them audaciously to Addis Ababa.

2. The three groups based in Mogadishu joined a few more individuals who have already had close relationships with the government of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). A dozen or so characters in search of a Pirandello are currently being hosted by the Ethiopians. Their objective is to fulfil the Ethiopian strategy of obstructing the reconstitution of an independent Somali State. The pursuit of a "building bloc" approach is a smokescreen to blunt the Arta peace process and simultaneously to negate the emergence of even an Ethiopian-sponsored viable alternative.

3. If Ethiopia is genuinely interested in a credible peace and national reconciliation in Somalia, it is a secret known only to her. We believe that the Security Council, the Secretary-General, OAU and even IGAD are not briefed properly about the "secret plan". The only plan we observe is a sinister one of a dissembling stance bent on the destruction of a present or a future Somali State.

4. Ethiopia has blatantly occupied the towns of Dolow, Bulo Hawo and Lugh in Gedo since August 1996. Ethiopia has similarly occupied towns in the Bay and Bakol regions since 1999. The Ethiopian military presence in Somalia has always been known and documented in the humanitarian circles serving Somalia, including United Nations agencies, international non-governmental organizations and donor and diplomatic missions based in Kenya. The World Food Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund, the Free State Agricultural Union, Trocaire, the African Medical and Research Foundation, Intersos, Terra Nuova and Care were some of the independent witnesses of the overwhelming military presence of Ethiopia in the Gedo, Bay and Bakol regions. The Transitional National Government has used diplomatic channels to reason with Ethiopia and to request the removal of Ethiopian forces from Somali territory. President Abdiqassim Salad Hassan has privately pleaded with the Ethiopian political leadership to remove the occupying forces from our country. Despite the protestations of the TPLF government that it was markedly different from the imperial and Mengistu regimes, it has justified ominously, on the one hand, the illegal occupation of Somali territory on the imperatives of its own national security needs and, on the other hand, blamed Somalia, the victim, for publicizing the presence of troops deep inside Somali territory.

5. The Addis Ababa leadership has accused the Transitional National Government of using Ethiopia as a scapegoat and has termed our discreet and peaceful efforts to free our people of oppression as a campaign to discredit Ethiopia and to obtain financial assistance from external sources.

6. It dawned on Ethiopia that its policy of blaming the victim was no longer tenable and that the standard imperial policies were no longer sufficient to contain the anger and liberation activities of the citizens of the occupied areas, and the pressure of the international community was proving to be unbearable. Under the cover of darkness Ethiopia pulled out its troops on Sunday night, 4 February 2001. Ethiopia, however, still occupies the border towns of El Barde and Qura Joome in Bakol and Dolow in Gedo. Ethiopian forces are still being used frequently in patrolling operations deep in our territory. These operations are against the Charter of the United Nations and the resolutions of the Security Council and are a threat to international peace and security. More pertinently, these operations are instruments to terrorize our people and to destabilize the Transitional National Government.

7. Ethiopia is pursuing its dangerous policy of recruiting, training, arming and supporting "friendly militias" in Gedo, Bay Bakol, Hiran, Galgadud and other regions close to the border. The creation and support of these militias are examples of the blatant Ethiopian interference in our internal affairs. They are a clear and present danger to our unity, territorial integrity and political independence. Ethiopia claims to prefer a "building bloc" approach to peace and national reconciliation in Somalia. Ethiopia claims to be mandated by IGAD, in the absence of a national government, to play a leading role in bringing about national reconciliation, peace and stability to Somalia. The Somali people have spoken and have decided that the Arta peace process is the only way out of the civil strife, lawlessness and contraction of the human spirit. Even if viable at some stage, the "building bloc" approach is no longer credible. There is a broadly defined peace process and the needed transitional National Charter and transitional national institutions are in place. The Somali people are yearning to get on with the difficult task of reconstituting a new Somali State that is committed to a culture of peace, democratic governance, reconstruction and recovery. We believe that the Ethiopian-created and supported "friendly militias" are nothing but wrecking squads that are programmed to destabilize Somalia, to brutalize our people, to obstruct the unfolding peace process and to destroy the hopes and aspirations of the Somali people.

8. Ethiopia is campaigning vigorously to discredit and destroy the Arta peace process. Instead of the broadly based and supported process, Ethiopia is determined to anoint a few individuals as the leaders of Somalia. The TPLF government in Addis Ababa has vociferously claimed not to be imperial in its orientation. The corralling of few individuals from the political wilderness is truly imperial but lacks at least the expected finesse. The selection of these individuals as the leaders of the Somali people is bound to be futile. They were unable to hold their small meeting inside the country. The people of Baidoba

rejected that outright and the people of the north-east have stated most emphatically that Garowe was out of bounds for the Ethiopian-inspired scheme. The spokesperson for the Ethiopian Foreign Ministry then stated that Addis Ababa was a safe and neutral venue for the blighted meeting. Indeed.

These are some of the ongoing activities that the Ethiopian Government is carrying out openly and arrogantly against Somalia and its people. These activities are blatant interferences in our internal affairs and pose a serious threat to the unity, territorial integrity and political independence of Somalia. My Government would like the Security Council to take note of these dangerous policies that are being executed by Ethiopia. These executed policies are of grave concern to Somalia and its people.

Somalia is bracing itself now for an onslaught of destabilization programmes that are being hatched by the Ethiopian Government and its anointed leaders. Ethiopia has been supplying weapons to its "friendly militias". Of particular concern is one of the Mogadishu-based warlords. He has been provided deadly landmines in the recent past and we have no assurance that would stop in the future. On the contrary, the planting of different types of landmines, the assassination of prominent citizens and other sabotage activities are expected to be carried out in Mogadishu and its environs. A reign of terror visited upon the inhabitants of Mogadishu, who are yearning for peace and stability, is not something to cherish. The prospect of an Ethiopian onslaught of destabilization is present, real and dangerous.

Yet another testimony to the Ethiopian determination to preclude a united and independent Somalia is the de facto recognition of the north-west. Ethiopia is the only country that is accepting the "passports" issued by the administrative entity in the north-west of Somalia. Ethiopia is placing contingents of its forces in Da'ar Budhug and Arabsiyo. These foreign troops are supposedly going to protect the Berbera-Hargeisa-Jigjiga corridor. Ethiopian Airlines is about to start twice weekly services between Hargeisa and Addis Ababa. Further, an agreement has been reached to allow an Ethiopian bank to operate in Hargeisa. The cumulative effect of these activities, which are focused on the north-west, is to negate the re-emergence of a unified, peaceful and independent Somalia.

The Security Council has repeatedly reaffirmed its commitment to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence and unity of Somalia. Somalia has assumed its rightful place in the United Nations, OAU, IGAD, the League of Arab States and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. The Transitional National Government is deeply grateful to the Security Council and the Secretary-General for their principled support of Somalia. The security situation of Mogadishu has improved significantly. All 14 police stations in Mogadishu are manned by the reconstructed police force of the Transitional National Government and there are neither green lines nor checkpoints run by the warlords. The level of political violence is almost non-existent in Mogadishu now, but as stated earlier, we are bracing up for destabilization activities engineered by our neighbour.

The Transitional National Government and the Somali people would like to alert the Security Council that it should remain seized of the matter of Ethiopian interference in our internal affairs.

We should be grateful if you would circulate this letter as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Ali Khalif **Galaydh**
Prime Minister, Somali Republic